

# *Heracleum candicans*



**Family:**

Umbelliferae/Apiaceae

**Local/common names:**

Himalayan  
Hogweed/Hogweed,  
Tookar, Tookar toona,  
Ngonboo Mo (Spiti), Swas  
(Lahaul), Patrala  
(Uttaranchal)

**Trade name:** Padra,  
Patrala

**Profile:**

*Heracleum candicans* is a stout herbaceous member of the family Apiaceae and is generally found in Pakistan to South China in the temperate to alpine zone. In India, it is found in the high altitude Himalayan areas of Ladakh, Lahaul and Spiti, Chamba, Kinnaur, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. While the plant is rarely cultivated because the local people consider it to be nothing more than fodder, it is extracted from the wild for its medicinal properties. As a result of heavy extraction from the forests the species has come under threat. The plant can be easily propagated through seeds and root cuttings.

**Habitat and ecology:** It is a common herb rarely cultivated and found in the alpine zone at an altitude ranging from 2500-3200 m. It is generally found in dry type of areas such as slopes of mountains and on rocks. The species is found from Pakistan to southwest China at an altitude of 1800-4300 m in open slopes and drier area. In Himachal Pradesh, the plant is frequently found to occur in Pangi, Bharmour (Kullu), Rohtang Pass, Lahaul, Kinnaur and common in Spiti division, where it is not extracted because of its inaccessible and distant location. In the eastern Himalayas the species is available in Mago River, Mago Ghitangchu, Mago Chitangrong and Thimbu Gompa of Tawang region.

**Morphology:** The rootstock of this plant is odorous, stout and perennial. The stems are up to 1.75 m tall and densely pubescent. The leaves are pinnate to pinnatifid, leaflets are oblong and the lower surface is pubescent. The flowers are small, white and borne in compound umbels. The fruits are pubescent and obovate.

**Distinguishing features:** The plant has got distinctly palmately lobed leaves. The plant parts (leaves, seeds etc.) when crushed give out a distinct aroma.

**Life cycle:** Flowering occurs in July-August and fruiting in September-October.

**Uses:** The roots are a very good source of xanthotoxin, which is used in the preparation of suntan lotions and to some extent for the treatment of leucoderma. Xanthotoxin isolated from the plant is highly efficacious in the treatment of leucoderma and psoriasis. *H. candicans* produces furanocoumarins, which are converted to xanthotoxin.

**Market rate:** Dried roots are sold at Rs.60-65/- per kg.